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## MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

**SUBJECT: Cabinet Meeting to Discuss the Recommendations Growing Out of  
"Operation Alert 1958"**

1. On 9 October 1958 at 0900 I represented the Director at an expanded Cabinet Meeting to discuss the recommendations growing out of "Operation Alert 1958."
2. The Director of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, Mr. Leo A. Hoegh, reviewed for the President the three phases of "Operation Alert 1958." Following this review he introduced the Chairman of the OPAL Seminar Groups which met at High Point for Phase III. Each Chairman presented a brief summary of the conclusions and recommendations which were, without exception I believe, lifted from the document "Report of Round Table Discussion and Seminar Group Reports" which we had already received from OCDM. I think that all of these reports might be summarized by saying that while there are a few bright spots in Civil Defense planning, assuming a major nuclear attack on the United States this planning is in fact grossly inadequate.
3. Following these presentations Mr. Hoegh summarized the recommendations on which Cabinet concurrence and Presidential approval were requested. (These are included in the 6 October 1958 Cabinet Paper 58-87.) He specifically enlisted the President's support to insure that fall-out shelters would be built in all new Federal buildings. He also enlisted the President's support for the modification of certain sectors which are now planned. (It was not entirely clear to me as to just exactly what Mr. Hoegh wanted in this regard.)
4. With regard to Recommendation F. there was some feeling that the 1 March 1959 deadline for presentation to the Cabinet was too short. The President replied to the effect that he thought everyone should bear in mind that this planning was for survival and not for conducting a war. He felt quite strongly that we must recognize that survival immediately after an attack would have to be carried on by existing agencies and that the creation of emergency agencies to fight the war was really another matter. As I understood it the deadline of 1 March 1959 remains unchanged.

5. There was some discussion on Recommendation C. which calls for regional operational sites with construction to start no later than January, 1960. The Department of the Treasury representative and the Deputy Director of the

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Bureau of the Budget indicated that they doubted the wisdom of approving this Recommendation inasmuch as the actual cost thereof had not been worked out. The President said that he, of course, assumed that no expenditures would be undertaken until they were put through the normal budgetary process. This item was discussed by several, including Arthur S. Flemming, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Postmaster General Arthur E. Summerfield and others. Mr. Hoegh indicated that eight such sites at an approximate cost of \$3,000,000 each were planned. He also explained that these would be underground, air conditioned sites with quite pleasant working conditions. The Department of the Treasury representative indicated that he felt quite strongly that \$24,000,000 would not be a drop in the bucket. He compared this to the cost of construction to date at High Point whereupon the President asked how much we had spent at that location. He was advised by Gordon Gray, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and former Director of the Office of Defense Mobilization, that to date we had spent \$33,000,000. The President noted that, of course, High Point took care of blast protection as well as fall-out and was really not comparable to the regional sites as he understood them. Secretary Flemming, also a former Director of the Office of Defense Mobilization, supported Recommendation C. very strongly and felt that it was absolutely essential to get on with this planning. The President finally said that he would like to have presented at some later date a complete plan with cost estimates for the eight regional sites. He also added that if we were merely talking about \$25,000,000 that that was one thing, but that if we were talking about \$250,000,000 that was quite another. Mr. Hoegh undertook to prepare such a presentation.

6. The President inquired as to the cost of the national radio hookup to communicate with the people. Mr. Hoegh said that while this was not finished, he believed that the preliminary estimate was about \$1,000,000. There seemed to be considerable skepticism as to whether this was realistic.

7. Secretary Dulles raised the question of supplies at the various relocation centers. He seemed critical of the fact that Mr. Hoegh and the OCDM people continued to emphasize construction rather than supplies for our people. It was his feeling that it would do little good for him to have adequate supplies in his cellar unless some provisions were also made for his neighbors. It was also his belief that if his neighbors did not have food, etc., he would share his supplies with them and that they would all be consumed within one day, and thereafter they would all starve together.

8. There was also considerable discussion concerning the need to declassify documents so that they could be presented to the state and local governments and, in fact, to the American people on an unclassified basis. The President said that he recognized the desirability, if not the necessity, of doing this but expressed

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great concern as to just how it should be done. He said he felt that the only way we could get the American people to do anything about this situation was to scare them and that when this happened reverberations would come back to the Congress and we would have another \$4,000,000,000 to \$5,000,000,000 added to the budget. Arriving at a solution to this dilemma he thought would be the "trick of the week."

9. The discussion then returned to the question of construction of certain regional sites. It was the feeling of several, particularly the Budget and Treasury representatives, that it would be premature to undertake this since the over-all pattern of operations had not yet been settled. The President stated that he thought that eight was a very modest number and that, in fact, two or three of these probably would be knocked out. He indicated no hesitancy in going ahead with these subject to all the details being worked out. He again emphasized that we must recognize that nothing would proceed according to any preconceived plan in case of such an emergency and that we must rely on regional authority and regional leadership during the survival period.

10. Postmaster General Summerfield raised the question as to whether the Post Office Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation would retain control of the communications systems which they now have in their regional centers. Mr. Hoegh indicated that certainly in peacetime there was no thought that anyone else should have control. The President asked the Postmaster General whether a careful study had been made of the mail and communications systems during the last day<sup>s</sup> before Germany's surrender in World War II. Mr. Summerfield said that such a study had been made and the President stated that he would like to have it presented to him inasmuch as it was his belief that practically nothing was going on in the way of communications during the last few days before the German surrender.

11. This item on the Agenda for the Cabinet was completed at about 1015 and those of us who were there only for this discussion retired from the room.



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